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OUR SPECIAL WIRE.

A STAID newspaper proprietor of the old school—a representative of the times when advertisements were taxed, the stamp-duty reigned supreme, and fast-flying Hoes were unknown—would be greatly discomfited were he permitted to revisit the glimpses of the moon, and note the changes that have occurred since his day in the department of periodical literature. Change succeeds change so rapidly, that we have not time to reflect upon their significance; and it not unfrequently happens that we are plunged into, and become reconciled to, a state of things which but a short time previous seemed unattainable. Perhaps in no sphere of modern energy is advancement more marked and astonishing than in that of the daily newspaper. The last ten years have created a revolution. The penny paper of to-day is, for size, cheapness, and accuracy of information, as much superior to the bi-weekly sheets of fifteen years ago, as our railways are to lumbering stage-coaches. The amount of energy, money, enterprise, and intellectual activity, expended every twenty-four hours upon the collection and issue of the current news, is something marvellous.

The most noticeable improvement upon the press of recent years is the large and growing extent to which the electric telegraph is employed as an auxiliary force. The introduction of this element promises in a short time to effect as vast an alteration in the conduct and management of the daily newspaper as has been wrought by the Hoe printing-machine. Even under the present system—and it may be said to be only in its infancy—nothing of importance transpires in the three kingdoms that is not flashed to the great centres of intelligence in the large towns. If an eminent politician make a speech late at night at Manchester, Liverpool, or Bristol, it is reported and transmitted to London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, appearing next morning in the columns of journals hundreds of miles away from the place where it was spoken. If a crime or accident of magnitude occur in any quarter of the empire accessible to the telegraph, the details are

carefully collected, written out into a narrative, and sent off on the wings of the lightning. The most enterprising prints in the empire in this respect are those of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Three of the daily newspapers in the former city, and two in the latter, have what are called 'special wires' for the transmission of important information from London. The compact entered into between the newspaper proprietors and the Telegraph Company gives to each newspaper the sole and exclusive control of one wire from seven in the evening till three o'clock the following morning. A sum amounting to close upon a thousand pounds per annum is charged for each separate wire, including the services of two clerks to work the instruments. This large outlay merely represents what is paid to the Telegraph Company, and is exclusive of the expense of collecting the news, with which that corporation has nothing whatever to do.

As a rule, the wires commence work at seven o'clock precisely, and are generally kept going, with slight intermissions, till three in the morning. If the wire be in good working-order, and not affected by accident or the weather, between five and six columns of matter can be transmitted by each wire—no despicable feat, when it is remembered that every line of that large quantity of material has to be written out in manuscript for the use of the printers. But should the weather be stormy, and the electric current be affected, great difficulty is experienced in transmitting a single column. A practised newspaper reporter considers the writing out of four columns of a speech between seven o'clock at night and three o'clock in the morning as a good average achievement. The telegraph clerk has, however, a very material advantage over the reporter, and can write considerably more than that quantity within the same time. The clerk writes as it were to dictation. He has no trouble in condensing, improving, or altering the sentences of his speaker, and can consequently transcribe straight on without pause or loss of time. Two small bells are attached to the telegraph instrument, which speak as with brazen tongue to the practised ear of the clerk. All the words in the

language can be swiftly and correctly represented by distinct intonations of the bells. Sound is the medium of conveyance by which the clerk reads the messages that are sent to him. He has merely to listen to the tune played upon the bells, and write down the words as if they were dictated by the human voice. To the uninitiated, the silvery tintinnabulation of the bells is a mere jumble of musical notes; but the disciplined clerk follows the sounds as unerringly as though they were spoken; and without lifting his eyes from the paper, writes by the ear page after page of manuscript. Clerks who are expert at their profession, can, by the aid of numerous contractions, write as fast as their collaborators at the other end can transmit; and if the wire is good, the longest speech that is ordinarily delivered in parliament can be sent from London to the north. But if the receiving-clerk is slow at penmanship, pauses are frequently made by the despatcher, to enable him to keep pace.

The wires by which the news is sent down to the Scotch papers go through Manchester, and follow the west-coast route. There is no break in the chain of communication. The transmitter telegraphs from the metropolis; and the transcriber receives the message in the capital of Scotland without interruption, as though the distance traversed were forty, instead of being four hundred miles. The Edinburgh news goes round by Glasgow, touching as it were in its flight the skirts of the great city of the west, and flashing back instantaneously to Edinburgh. At first sight, it seems a roundabout method to send messages from London to Edinburgh through Glasgow; but it is not so in reality. The necessity arises from the course followed by the telegraph posts. By this arrangement, Edinburgh, instead of being, as is popularly supposed, nearer London than Glasgow, is more distant by forty miles. This, however, makes no difference, so far as transmission is concerned. The strength of the electric current is, for all working purposes, as good at Edinburgh as it is at Glasgow. When telegraphing was less known than it now is, it was held to be impossible to transmit uninterruptedly between two points so far distant, and the belief was, that the news was first sent to Manchester, and written out by a clerk there, and then re-transmitted to Scotland. This is a fallacy. Occasionally, a wire going the longer distance gets feeble from atmospheric causes, and the signals are not sufficiently intelligible to the clerk who is receiving them. This, however, is caused by the weather, and not by the distance traversed; and the remedy is to try other wires, with the view of testing whether they are in better condition. The best is then worked for the rest of the morning; but should all be equally bad, then occurs a 'break-down;' the clerks fold their arms, and give up their instruments in despair; and the newspaper apologises to its readers for being unable to control electricity, so as to make its action independent of the elements.

The Scotch daily press may now be said to be sub-edited in London. The metropolis is yearly becoming more important to it, and, if matters proceed as they have begun, the time is not far distant when the editorial chairs themselves will be transferred to the south. As it is, this result is all but achieved, for when the occasion demands such a procedure, leading articles are written in London, and despatched by the wires. Strangely would it have sounded in the ears of our forefathers,

who derived their information at intervals few and far between from the modest news-letter, had they been told that the time was at hand when events transpiring at midnight four hundred miles away from their place of residence would be fully detailed at seven o'clock the next morning in the local newspaper, which makes its appearance simultaneously with the morning coffee. Even to us, it seems somewhat odd that the sub-editors and reporters of the Edinburgh and Glasgow press should be employed in London, the fruit of their labours this evening being sent off to the printers in Scotland, for to-morrow morning. And yet this remarkable process goes on every evening of the week. Whilst Edinburgh sleeps tranquilly, the telegraph-clerk at Princes Street is writing to the dictation of his comrade in Threadneedle Street, describing perhaps a murder that only two hours before threw Whitechapel into consternation; setting down the details of a fire that, as he writes, is casting its red gleam over the Thames; giving the *ipsissima verba* of the beginning of Mr Disraeli's speech on the Irish Church, while yet the roof of the House of Commons is ringing with the lusty cheers of his followers. On exciting parliamentary nights, it has happened that the compositors in the metropolis of Scotland were putting in type the first column of an oration by Mr Bright or Mr Gladstone while these gentlemen were yet speaking at Westminster. Puck has not so much to boast of, after all, in putting a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. We are outstripping even the dream of the poets.

The electric wires are exerting a deep and extensive influence over the provinces. Within the last three years, they have brought Edinburgh within two-score miles of London. Metaphorically, the printers may be said to lift their type from Threadneedle and Moorgate Streets, where the telegraph-offices are situated. Auld Reekie has her hand upon that mighty heart of the metropolis described by Wordsworth, and registers its faintest throbs. The result is, that our Scotch newspapers are becoming more cosmopolitan and imperial in their tone. Their provincialism is decreasing. The quantity of news nightly despatched from the south has had the effect of decreasing the amount of space formerly devoted to purely local intelligence. The craving of the public for the latest and newest information has caused the newspaper editors to give it the utmost prominence. Hence it sometimes happens that the whole available space devoted to news is occupied with that which is transmitted by telegraph.

People accustomed to while away a pleasant half-hour in scanning the newspapers over the breakfast-table, have little conception of the great amount of expenditure which the penny represents. First of all, there is the eight or ten hundred pounds paid annually for the simple use of the wire. Large as this sum is, it is but about two-thirds of the total outlay. The wire of itself is useless unless it is kept supplied with matter that is useful and interesting to the public. The real work and difficulty of the undertaking is to procure full and accurate records of passing events. Probably none but those who are professionally engaged upon the press are aware of what the collection of news in such a Babylon as London really means. The immense size of the place, the important meetings and demonstrations that are held in it, and the interest attaching to it as

being the great centre of the civilised world, make the work of daily gathering information both necessary and arduous. The proceedings of parliament in these stirring days of politics naturally attract much attention, and must be carefully recorded. The money market and the most authentic commercial rumours also claim to be fully reported. Sporting, on the other hand, has become so deeply rooted in the national character, that daily descriptions of its prospects and achievements are absolutely essential. The tattle and rumours of the clubs, moreover, call for the ready pen of the experienced correspondent. And, in addition to all these special departments, there is the wide field of general news to be cultivated.

To overtake such labours, the Scotch daily newspapers have each an organised staff of reporters, sub-editors, and correspondents in the metropolis, varying in number, according to the means of the journal, from two to five. One man redacts the evening papers, taking from them any items of general interest; a second is specially charged with the collection of news of a later date, which does not appear in the night editions; a third reports the proceedings before the Private Bills' Committees; and a fourth describes the scenes in parliament on the occasions of an exciting division or ministerial crisis. Then, again, a special and independent staff is organised to report Scotch debates and speeches on questions of great public interest in the House of Commons. During the parliamentary session, Westminster is, of course, the centre whence emanates the largest and most important portion of the news that is despatched by special wire. The telegraph-offices being all in the City, messengers have to be employed who go and come regularly between Cornhill and Palace Yard during the night, Hansom cabs being employed on busy nights to convey them to and fro, in order to expedite the messages. The manuscript is enclosed in large envelopes, bearing printed directions, and addressed to the clerk in charge of the special telegraph department, who opens each parcel, registers in a book the number of pages that are sent, and the hour at which he receives them, and then hands them over to the subordinates for transmission. When several important meetings and events take place, as is frequently the case, on the same day, the clerks are swamped with 'copy.' Print and manuscript to twice the amount that can be sent off within the regulated time, arrive in hot haste by successive messengers, each correspondent having written what came within the scope of his department at full length, regardless of the fact that space required to be reserved for his collaborators. On these occasions, the sub-editor's authority comes into action. He selects what is most important, despatches it first, and abridges the rest so as to insure its being sent off.

Notwithstanding every precaution, mistakes and blunders are of frequent occurrence. Unfortunately, telegraph wires cannot be completely controlled or in every respect depended upon with the accuracy of mechanism that is not subject to volatile and disturbing influences. The best-laid plans are often frustrated. There is a storm in the north, the weather is unpropitious at Manchester, and the wires go wrong. Neither skill nor persuasion avails to get any work out of them. The currents are interrupted, and the signals are so faint at Glasgow that nothing can be made of them. In

these cases, the labours of the correspondents go for nought; the piles of manuscript lie unused, and the newspaper readers are deprived of their accustomed food. Such disasters are aggravated when they occur on very important nights, when Gladstone or Lowe speaks upon the Reform question, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduces his Budget, the Naval Review in honour of the Sultan takes place at Spithead, or some dreadful tragedy is enacted in the metropolis. Then may be seen the representatives of the various newspapers going about the telegraph-offices in a state of grief and distraction, impugning the divine government of the world, and anathematising the ill-luck which has caused them to spend their strength in vain. The agony of the correspondent is, however, the fierce joy and time of gratulation of the telegraph-clerk. Kept uninterruptedly at hard and continuous labour for eight hours each evening, he keenly enjoys the sweets of relaxation, and rubs his hands with satisfaction when the opportunity for such occurs. He delights in the elemental strife which renders his wire for the time useless, folds his arms, lights his pipe, and passes the hours in entertaining chat.

If a record were kept of the whimsical blunders that are constantly occurring in connection with the special wires, a most amusing *Joe Miller* might easily be compiled. The matter often arrives so late at its destination, that there is no time for correction of the press, and the public are consequently treated to much that is equally humorous and inexplicable. The reader, for instance, comes across the following sentence, and is much disquieted: 'The speeches in the Reform debate threaten to stretch to the crack of the door.' He may ruminate upon the matter as long as memory holds her seat in his distracted globe, without being able to solve the mystery. The correspondent in London alone has the key, and the knowledge of the fact that he wrote 'crack of doom.' Telegraph-clerks, however, in the full heat and fervour of their driving, should not be held responsible for a knowledge of Shakspeare. Again, one might think that the House had forgotten its dignity, and the marvels of the olden time had again come back, upon seeing the statement in prominent type that 'Colonel Taylor, the Conservative Whip, has forty members on his back who are desirous of speaking in the great debate;' the words 'on his back' being, of course, a sapient substitution for 'on his book.' Paterfamilias may, if he be sedulous in politics, have to lament the questionable delicacy of such a sentence as: 'Mr Lowe made a furious attack upon the Treasury Bench, and succeeded in touching the shirts of the government;' the latter being a transmutation of 'vexing the skirts of the government.' In like manner, 'Each says' suffers a sea-change, and comes forth to the sun as 'Sach says,' and is looked upon as the name of a possible German professor. Grammarians not unfrequently have their parsing powers tested by the examination of such sentences as these: 'The weather at Newmarket to-day was so favourable, the sky being dull and clouded, while torrents of rain fell very frequently, much interest attached to the Biennial, Friponnier's defeat was the topic on the course.'

Amusing incidents also crop up incidentally in connection with the wires. The London correspondent of one of the newspapers has a room at one of the telegraph stations in which he does his

work and superintends the wire generally. The station in question is situated within a building containing a large range of chambers and public offices. The outer door leading to the various landings is closed at night, and a hall-porter is stationed on duty to attend to visitors. Upon one occasion, the hall-porter fell asleep, and the correspondent rang the bell in vain; he was unable to procure admittance. Far aloft, near the top of the building, the telegraph-clerk plied his vocation beyond the reach of the vexing influence of the bell. Peacefully the hall-porter enjoyed the oblivious repose of his great stuffed chair; all the bells of Bow would not have awakened him from the serenity of his dreams. The correspondent was in despair; time was going fast, and in a little time his special information would be of no avail. In a moment of inspiration, the thought suddenly struck him to ask the people in Glasgow to open the door in London. He rushed to a telegraph-office, and desired the clerk in Glasgow to telegraph to the clerk in London that the porter was asleep, and the door barred. This was done. The clerk, sitting high aloft in his cage at the top of the mansion, immediately left his instrument, descended and awoke the porter; the door was opened, and the heavy stone of anxiety was rolled away from the mind of the tremulous correspondent. An experience of an equally humorous character befell the same gentleman on another occasion. The London clerk was telegraphing furiously to Glasgow one night, when he discovered that his colleague in that city was paying no heed to his messages. It is customary for the man at one end to send back repeating signals to the man at the other, to shew that all is going well. On the night in question, however, no such signals came. The transmitter in London demanded the reason, and asked whether the receiver was not at his post; but there was no response—the wire was dumb. Suddenly, the secret flashed upon the mind of the correspondent: the clerk at Glasgow was lying intoxicated by the side of his instrument! The indefatigable correspondent rushed off to another telegraph-office, and despatched a message to his employers, telling them from London what they did not know in Glasgow, that their clerk was asleep; and in the course of a short time the special wire was working with its accustomed regularity.

BLONDEL PARVA.

CHAPTER XXI.—LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS.

As Pleasure, according to the philosopher's definition, is merely freedom from pain, so to one who has been heavily burdened with woes, even a little lifting of the load seems an approach to pleasure. By comparison with what Kate Irby had suffered in those terrible hours between the reception of her cousin's menacing epistle and that confession extorted by Maurice, her present condition was more than tolerable. She had now a trusty confidant, able and willing to aid her; and he was busy in the work. There might be suspense, but there was no inaction. She received letters from him, written, however, in guarded language, which gave her hopes of her father's escape. He was very, very ill, they said, but not too ill to move: it was hoped that he might in a week or two be got on board ship—if the port was not too strictly watched—to Australia, where the

poor old man had friends far away in the Bush. Maurice had had an interview with his acquaintance the secretary of the insurance company; and not a very satisfactory one. The case, of course, had been put before him hypothetically; but it was that gentleman's view, that unless the whole sum of which the companies had been defrauded was repaid, that they would exact the pound of flesh—demand the punishment of the offender. This, indeed, arose from the difficulty of the case, the danger of compounding a felony, rather than from any desire of vengeance—but it was no less perilous on that account. No steps with respect to restitution ought, certainly, since they must necessitate confession, to be taken until Robert Irby was in safety. The only piece of good news, in this respect, was, that Sir Richard Anstey had not as yet communicated with the companies, but was endeavouring to run down his game alone. Maurice had not the twofold enemy to guard against. He always wound up with an entreaty that Kate should keep up her spirits, and the assurance that he was her very sincere friend and well-wisher. His letters were in tone precisely those of a paid agent who also takes a friendly interest in the affairs of his employer.

In reply, Kate wrote to 'Mr Robinson,' with grateful and even affectionate fervour, but in a strain infinitely removed from that of love. She could never shew herself sufficiently sensible of his efforts to serve her and hers; of his noble forgetfulness of the wrong she had unconsciously done him. He would always have her prayers. She assured him how, thanks to his good offices, she felt more hopeful—or, at all events, less despairing than she had thought possible. Her greatest trial was the deception she was about to practise towards her mother.

'She speaks of matters which, although they are dead, and have no resurrection, yet have life enough in their mere memory to wring my heart. She prides herself (dear heart!) on our improved finances; for we are really living within our income, and I rejoice at it, although the savings are not for us. "You will be quite an heiress, Kate, my darling, after all," said my poor mother yesterday. But pardon me, Maurice' [the name was here almost entirely erased, and 'Mr Glyn' written over it]; 'I must not thus make your heart ache.'

Of matters at Blondel she had little to tell; but since he had bidden her to write him fullest details, she mentioned that a stranger was staying at *the Bell*—his mission, it seemed, to secure impressions of brasses from the tombs in the priory—a vulgar, prying sort of person, who had introduced himself a day or two ago, on some pretence, into the manor-house, and had been repeatedly seen loitering about the gate-keeper's cottage. Mary did not seem impressed with the notion that he had any object—but to herself everything seemed pregnant with danger—and would it not be better for Mr Glyn to drop a line of warning? In conclusion, she always sent her love—and in one instance (since Maurice said the sick man had asked for it) her full forgiveness—to her father.

Much of Kate's time was now passed at the cottage, or at the priory, in the companionship of Mary and the gate-keeper; the only ones with whom she could converse upon the matter next her heart. The old man spoke to her readily

enough of what she already knew—that is, concerning his recognition of his late master (for he always called him 'Master')—but with respect to the state of mind and body of her unfortunate father, he was very reticent. 'As for being sorry for all that had come and gone, if that was what Miss Kate meant, Master was grievously burdened with the thought of the ruin impending over wife and daughter; he bitterly reproached himself for having ventured to Blondel, and thereby revealed his identity to Sir Richard: but he was not sorry—that was the truth—that he had come home, even though it were but to die.' [And here the blind man would chuckle to himself in an inexplicable, and, indeed, a rather horrible way.] 'Master was very ill, that was certain; but, considering the pain he suffered, not impatient; the source of greatest comfort to him was that he had seen his darling, about whom he was never tired of conversing. It was for her sake as a child that he had been tempted to commit the wrong he had; it was for her sake that he had come back—just to see her dear face—and put himself in peril of the law.' In short, there was a something of feudal feeling in the gate-keeper—a worthy law-fearing man himself—which caused him to regard the offence of his old master in a very charitable light, and to defend him even against those least likely to be his accusers.

Once Mary ventured to ask her father whether the sick man seemed to be afraid of capture, or rather of the punishment that would result from it.

'For himself, child, he cares nothing; he fears nothing; but rather than bring shame upon Miss Kate and Madam, he would kill himself—if it were necessary: of that I am certain.'

'Kill himself?' cried Mary, shuddering. 'That would be a worse crime than—'

'How do you know?' cried the blind man angrily, smiting the stone floor of the parlour with his staff. 'Hold your tongue, child, I beg.'

A week, a fortnight thus passed away without incident, when a certain letter came for Kate.

The communication was satisfactory, inasmuch as it conveyed no new alarms, but what struck Kate cold with terror was that the envelope had been tampered with: a certain simple detective apparatus which Maurice had adopted in the fastening of his dispatches revealed this to her at once.

By return of post Mr Robinson was informed of this catastrophe. Two days afterwards—it was on a Friday—Kate received a hurried note—without one word of reference to the above important communication: 'The port of London is too closely watched, and we are now at Liverpool, from whence he sails (*D.V.*) on Saturday. Directly he is safe off in the *Ariadne*, you shall hear.—Address, Maurice Glyn, Esq., 4 Elspeth Terrace, Liverpool.'

Here was food for wonder and apprehension indeed. Maurice could surely not have received her last intimation, or he would never have intrusted to the post so important a secret. It was indeed a complete revelation of his plans, which were now, without doubt, in the possession of her father's pursuers; for the envelope in this case also shewed signs of having been opened since it had been fastened down.

Note in hand, Kate flew to the cottage: just as she reached the footpath which led to it through the wood, she met the *Bell* fly, with that objectionable person, in rusty habit, in it, evidently bound

for the railway station: his smug countenance seemed to her to wear a look of malicious satisfaction. Her heart sank within her; her limbs could scarcely support her on her way.

'Dear Mary, look at this,' cried she, giving her friend the letter at the cottage-door. 'He knows nothing of the snare that is spread for him. All is lost!'

'Not yet,' said Mary bravely. 'Have confidence in Mr Maurice Glyn. I have had a letter from him myself this morning, telling the same news with the same openness. True, he knows nothing of his letters having been tampered with, yet he is too wise, too cautious, to write like this without some reason; I am certain of it. Why, it was only a day or two ago he warned me to beware of that man who has been troubling my father so about the brasses—as though he could hurt us! He is on his guard, be sure.'

Kate sighed. 'What is that, Mary?'

'An advertisement that he enclosed, that's all; the time of sailing of the *Ariadne*, A1, from Liverpool to Melbourne; on Saturday, that is, to-morrow, at 8 A.M.'

'He will never get on board,' groaned Kate. 'They will seize him hours before—Stay, Mary; all may be well yet. How could I have forgotten it? There is the telegraph!'

'Ah! yes; there is the telegraph,' echoed Mary, yet with none of her friend's triumphant excitement. 'But I am not sure, Miss Kate, as to using that. Mr Glyn said nothing about telegraphing. We had better stick to our orders: he laid—Mr Glyn did—very strict injunctions upon father and me.'

'But this is a case he could not possibly have foreseen, Mary. I shall go to the station at once;' and with that she rose and laid her hand upon the door.

'You will do as you please, dear Miss Kate. Yet, remember, if it is found possible to read letters in their passage through the post, how much more easy is it to read telegrams.'

'I will shape the message so that no one can suspect its meaning.'

'But the address, Miss Kate?'

'If what we suspect has happened, the address is known. I am resolved to do it;' and she opened the door.

'Then let me go with you,' cried Mary, snatching up her bonnet and shawl; but she had to run to overtake Kate.

The road was at first shut in by trees, whose leaves were changing colour; then dipped down upon the desolate flat, over whose long grasses the sea-breeze was billowing, as though ocean itself still possessed the soil. Clouds of sand shewed they were approaching the shore. Before them, close to a dismantled martello-tower, and on the spot over which Duke William's Norman galleys had once sailed, stood the little station of the Coast Railway, from which Kate (quite regardless of these stupendous changes) was about to telegraph. She was well known to the station-master, who was also pointsman, porter, and electrician to this miniature establishment, which consisted of one room. As she opened the door, this official was engaged at his desk. 'Good-morning, Mr—'

Before she could finish the sentence, he turned round, and she saw that he was a stranger.

'Mr Mirk is on his holiday, ma'am, and I am

doing his duty in the meantime,' observed this personage respectfully. 'Can I be of any service?'

'Don't telegraph, Miss Kate,' said Mary in a hurried whisper. 'I know this man; he comes from Swinlake—Sir Richard's railway station.'

But she spoke too late; indeed, Kate was too hurried to listen.

'I wish to send a message to Liverpool,' said she in anxious tones. 'It is important. Can it go at once? What time will it get there?'

'It can go at once to London, ma'am; and will be in town in five minutes. As to when it will be forwarded to Liverpool, I can't say.'

Kate had produced her pocket-book, and was writing eagerly, for 'forms' of dispatch the little station did not possess.

'From Kate Irby, Blondel Parva, to Maurice Glyn, 4 Elsieph Terrace, Liverpool.—What you feared for your letters has happened; it is certain they know all. Not a moment to be lost. Flee!'

The women watched the countenance of the clerk as he read the words out. Mary secretly thought that it was not so impassive as is usual with such officials when upon duty, but what use was there in increasing Kate's anxiety, by mentioning this?

'Flee!' said the clerk, repeating the last word. 'Is it "Flee!"'

'That is right,' answered Kate. 'I should like to see the message sent, if you please.'

'Certainly, ma'am.' The clerk began to work the machine—that cross between a beer-engine and a barometer—standing, of necessity, with his back to the spectators. 'Click, click; rattle, rattle; click, click.'—'The charge is eighteenpence, ma'am,' said he blandly, at the conclusion of his labours.

'Here is half-a-crown; pray, keep the rest for your promptitude,' said Kate; 'and thank you.'

'Really, miss?' The clerk hesitated; blushed a little, doubtless from modesty; then pocketed the money.

The message he had really sent ran as follows:

'From John Jackson, Blondel Parva, to Sir Richard Anetey, Eaton Place, London.—Miss Irby tells Maurice Glyn, at 4 Elsieph Terrace, Liverpool: "What you feared for your letters has happened; it is certain they know all. Not a moment to be lost. Flee!"'

CHAPTER XIII.—THE RESERVED COMPARTMENT.

It is the Tuesday previous to the events narrated in the last chapter, and the mail-train is starting from the London terminus for Liverpool. There are not many passengers. It is too late in the year for town-folks to be travelling northwards for pleasure: the autumn has begun, and the wind is cold. One traveller, in particular, a tall gray-bearded man, but bent either with age or illness, shivers in the blast notwithstanding his multitudinous wraps. He limps rapidly up and down, looking into the windows of the second-class carriages.

'What is it?' inquires a porter curtly, almost suspiciously.

'I was told there was a carriage here "reserved" for me.'

'Not it,' says the porter, whose speech is redundant only to first-class folks; sharp and short to second-class; and peremptory—'T'other end of the train, stupid; get in with ye, can't ye?'—to the third.

'I know there *was* a carriage,' persists the invalid querulously.

'Any name?'

'Yes: Jones—no, Martin,' ejaculates the other, correcting himself hastily.

'All right, sir; first-class, sir; this way, sir.'

And the porter points to a well-cushioned compartment, with 'Engaged' upon it. 'Shall I look after your luggage, sir?'

'No, no. I haven't got any. A gentleman—that is, *another* gentleman—has charge of it.'

'He had better be quick, sir; there's the five minutes' bell a-ringing.'

'That's him: there—yonder—the man in the cloak. Tell him I'm here.'

The porter made a dive among the hurrying crowd.

'Damme,' muttered the sick man, 'what a start! What a thing it is to be a swell! First-class! It's better than a bed; it's better than a tap-room. I wonder whether he will bring any brandy.'

The man in the cloak—he has put its collar up, as if he also feels the cold—comes to the window.

'Are you all right, my good sir?'

'No; I'm devilish ill. I should like some brandy.'

'I have a flaskful,' replies the other, getting into the carriage.

The porter at the window touches his hat expectantly to the sick man. 'I found the gentleman, sir.'

'So I see. It was deuced clever of you, considering that I pointed him out.'

The train begins to move: the glass is pulled up so sharply that it almost catches the porter's nose.

'It is particularly requested that no temptation in the way of gratuity be offered to the company's servants,' roars the sick man through the pane, pointing to the notice-board bearing that inscription. Then, as the engine shrieks and yells, he leans back on the unaccustomed cushions, and bursts into a peal of malicious laughter.

'Hush, hush, my good sir,' says his companion reprovingly.

'I can't help it,' rejoins the other, much out of breath. 'First-class! Only think of it! O lor!'

Greatly tickled by this reflection, the old gentleman chuckles, until, being really very weak and unwell, he is upon the verge of choking. He is with difficulty understood to ask whether he is going *first-class* to Australia.

'No; I'm afraid we can't quite afford that,' responds his companion. 'But every care will be taken of you.'

'Ah,' replies the other with a wry face, 'I'm used to that. Plenty of care—plenty of *watchfulness*. An attendant to walk out with one. Meals punctual. A private chaplain kept; likewise a medical adviser.'

It is evident that these two persons do not now move in the same rank of life; although, perhaps, they may have done so at one time.

Their present mode of travelling is habitual with the second and much younger passenger; he rests his hat in the straps above him, and places his umbrella in the cradle—proceedings which, simple and natural though they be, elicit astonishment from the spectator.

'Blessed if I knew what they were for,' says he.

'Well, you have been so long out at elbows, you

see, my friend, that these little luxuries are strange to you. But you'll soon get accustomed to them. They have all these things in Australia now, just as they have here.'

'Ah,' muttered the other disconsolately. 'I haven't got there yet. I wish I was off.'

'It will be all right, Mr Martin, never fear. Your berth is taken. By Saturday night, there will be many a league of salt water between you and your—your friends. As soon as we have got into our snug lodgings, I shall write to those whom it concerns, and tell them where we are. They will scarcely believe the good news unless it's in print, so I'll cut out the advertisement. *The Ariadne from Liverpool to Melbourne at 8 A.M.*'

'I tell you *what*, Mr Glyn,' observed the old man admiringly; 'you're a cunning one, *you* are. It's very lucky for us poor devils that have to live by their wits that you are not a Peeler. *The Arryadne!* O lor, O lor!'

Perhaps the common tie between the two companions was a keen sense of humour; for the relish with which the invalid seemed to enjoy this joke (albeit *caviare* to the reader), was not a whit inferior to the pleasure derived from it by our old acquaintance, Mr Maurice Glyn. He was the first, however, to recover himself from his paroxysm.

'Do, pray, be careful, Mr Martin,' implored he: 'you are not strong enough yet to laugh like that. You'll kill yourself. One would think your life was insured in three different offices.'

And here, we are sorry to have to write, Mr Glyn indulged in another chuckle, which, however, was not this time echoed by his aged companion. Perhaps he was, after all, not quite so dead to the stings of conscience as he appeared. There ensued a lull in their merriment.

'When do I go on board?' inquired the old man, somewhat testily.

'Any time before 8 A.M., my good sir, as per advertisement.'

'It's devilish early. But there; *my* comfort is not much consulted.'

'You have been used to get up earlier,' returned Maurice laconically. 'Besides, you may sleep on board overnight, if you please.'

'Not I. I hate it. I've been across the herring-pond before, you know.'

'Just so. I wouldn't come back *again*, if I were you.'

There was a sternness in Glyn's tone which contrasted curiously enough with his late high good-humour.

'You are very pleasant, when you are pleased,' observed the old man in gruff and sour tones.

'Ah.' That was all Maurice deigned to say; and it was said in a very unconciliatory manner; yet, if his travelling-cap had not been so tipped over his eyes, and his cloak drawn so high to meet it, the dim light from the lamp would have been sufficient to shew his features once more wrinkled with violent laughter. 'What a beast to tame!' murmured he to himself. 'What tricks! How hard one has to hit him over the nose!'

It is now night. Nothing is heard but the roar and rush of the train, and the savage shriek of the engine, as it flashes through trembling stations, or buries itself in the heart of the hills. Neither Maurice nor his companion sleep: the one is too anxious; the other, anxious also, is too ill.

'Have you any brandy?' groans the latter. All

the fun has fled from his haggard face, and given place to pain and unrest.

'Yes; no—why, I gave you the flask, did I not?'

'A mere thimbleful,' answered the other contemptuously: 'not a pint. There's a dog—a devil—tearing at my inside!'

'What can I do? Are you too hot?'

'Ay, red-hot: burning.'

'Shall I open the window?'

'No; I shiver.'

'Patience, my good sir: we shall soon be there. You will be better presently.'

'Ay.' It seemed as though that monosyllable contained the concentration of cynicism, scepticism, the very essence of bitterness—a gall-nut.

Maurice leaned forward and gazed into his companion's face. There was no answering look: the invalid had fainted.

'Unhappy wretch!' murmured the young man, as he let down the glass, and the black night rushed in. 'Suppose he is not well enough to sail! Suppose he dies!'

WHERE DO THE CITIZENS SLEEP?

THE City of London, comprising about ninety small parishes, is less than one square mile in area; whereas the whole metropolis, in all its vastness, reaches nearly a hundred and twenty square miles. The City *cannot* enlarge, seeing that it is hemmed in on all sides. It cannot increase in population, unless ordinary dwelling-houses increase in number or in height. The process has been just the reverse of this. Modern banks and insurance offices now occupy spots on which whole blocks of dwelling-houses used to stand. The Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, and other public buildings, have similarly done their work as house-destroyers. The approaches to London and Southwark bridges, the new Cannon Street and the new Gresham Street, the viaducts and the stations of the insatiable South-eastern and Chatham and Dover Railways, the gropings and cuttings of the Metropolitan between Smithfield and Finsbury, the formation of the new Holborn Valley Viaduct—all have necessitated the pulling down of vast numbers of dwelling-houses, the inhabitants of which have had to seek homes outside the City, seeing that such homes in the City are not to be found. From these causes, the population of the City, meaning those who sleep and have their homes in the City, is gradually lessening; and there can be little doubt that this process will continue—making the City a concentrated place of business only.

Look on the other side of the picture. There are more churches and chapels, more clergymen and ministers, in this square mile of ground, than on any equal area in the Queen's dominions. There are more children under education in proportion to the population. There are more customs' duties, more commerce, more trading profits (as denoted by income-tax), more shipping, higher rents, more rateable annual value, in proportion to the population, than anywhere else. The census of 1861 talked about 2000 houses in the City being 'uninhabited.' This has always seemed a strange thing to persons who know how difficult it is to obtain any houses, at anything like a reasonable rental; while some have plunged into a tone of pity for the poor City at being in a state of decline, dilapidation, gradual abandonment. But the truth is, that these 2000 houses are under the care of the

police at night. They are full of bustle, business, and people during the day; but no one sleeps there, the police outside keeping a watch on them at night—not, it must be admitted, always effectually. There are 600 blocks of buildings in the City, entirely occupied as offices, with perhaps only one porter or so to sleep in each block. In various ways, the oddest inferences have been drawn from this disregard (by the census) of all citizens except those who sleep within the precincts.

The City has been a little nettled at all this. It does not choose to sit down quietly with its conventional 100,000 souls or so, and to see statistics of gigantic wealth and gigantic crime built up on so slender a basis. Last year, the House of Commons appointed a select committee to inquire into the local government and taxation of the metropolis; the city appointed another committee to 'watch' it; and this second committee decided that it would be a useful work to ascertain exactly how many persons there are in the City of London in the daytime. The Registrar-general's census of 1861 was, as we all know, a night enumeration, ignoring altogether the state of the houses and the streets during the busy hours of day. No such thing as a house-to-house computation by day had been made for many generations; and the committee found formidable difficulties in effecting it. They had no compulsory powers whatever; they had to rely on the good feeling of the inhabitants generally. As different days of the week present different trading aspects in the City, it was deemed advisable to extend the inquiry over six successive days, and strike an average of the whole.

Well, what was the result? The enumerators found, after patient inquiry, that although there are only about 110,000 persons who *sleep* in the City, there are 280,000 who *belong* to it, to all intents and purposes, as being regularly and daily engaged, occupied, or employed within its limits. In other words, of the whole population of the City, about forty per cent. dwell there at night, while the remaining sixty per cent. quit the place after the close of business-hours, to go to their domestic firesides elsewhere. Three-fifths of those who make their money in the City spend it out of the City. These three-fifths comprise, almost to a man, the mercantile and commercial class, employers and employed. 'In taking a census,' say the City committee (and they are justified in saying it), 'to ignore the millowners and spinners of Manchester; or to omit the coal-owners, workers, and shippers of Northumberland; or to gather the census of Belgravia and West London in the autumn, when aristocracy is out of town—would not so grossly misrepresent facts, as to eliminate the banking, mercantile, and commercial element from the enumeration of the City of London by taking its census in the night.' There are sixty-eight members of parliament who have offices within the City, and are to be found there daily throughout a large portion of the year. There are 56 peers and 130 members of parliament who are directors of commercial undertakings which must have a home in the commercial centre.

Mr Benjamin Scott, the City chamberlain, has published a volume of 200 pages, vindicating the old City from certain charges which from time to time are brought against it. So far as this vindication relates to projects of reform, and opposition to these projects, we are not here concerned with it; but it deals very completely with the day-and-

night census question. Never before was the census so overhauled—or rather, the inferences drawn from it. No one doubts the honesty and general accuracy of the returns; but we now know how little the night census tells us of the relative importance of the City. Take the census of 1861, for instance. There are only 356 'merchants' set down to the credit of the City, although the number really amounts to thousands; only nine bankers, only ten stock and share brokers, only thirty-nine shipping-brokers and agents, and not one underwriter. Knowing that there are more than 1200 stockbrokers and jobbers altogether, it is certainly curious to find the City credited with only as many as there are fingers on the two hands; but a solution of the mystery is afforded, when we learn that ninety-nine out of every hundred of those sharp-witted gentlemen start off away from the City as soon as the day's business is ended. But the oddity becomes very striking when we find forty-four farmers, three farm-bailiffs, twenty-three gardeners, and one shepherd peacefully residing in the quiet glades and verdant meads of the City. Four times as many farmers as stockbrokers, and a few to spare! The truth is, those farmers had come up to London on business, and slept on the census-night at some or other of the City hosteleries; the census-people nailed them, and put them down to the credit of the City—and Hodge, the shepherd, likewise, who probably slept at the *Pig and Whistle*, in one of the minor streets. As we have already said, the absurdity here is, not in the census, but in the mode of making use of it. 'It is doubtless most convenient,' says the City chamberlain, 'in order to the numbering of the people of the United Kingdom, that the decennial census should be taken at midnight.' But the midnight census, having served for that purpose, should not be used as a basis for statistics properly applicable to daily life and activity. If the census were to be taken at noon, the great-small City of London would indeed make a different figure. 'If the census were taken in October instead of in April, the return for the metropolis would ignore the existence of the aristocratic classes of the community altogether; St George's, Hanover Square, and Belgravia would then appear depopulated, or would be peopled exclusively by charwomen; the Houses of Peers and Commons would be represented by housekeepers; and the gate-keeper at Buckingham Palace would be the only representative of royalty in town.'

Well, then, where *do* those citizens sleep—the 170,000 strong who essentially belong to the City, although they do not pass the night within its limits? Kensington district, as one example of a suburb, has something like 200,000 inhabitants; and there is among these such a strong muster of merchants, bankers, stock and colonial brokers, ship-owners, accountants, and clerks (2000 or so altogether), that we may clearly set these down as City-men, although their homes, and wives and families, and servants and luxuries, are in Kensington—not Kensington the village, but that wide-spreading district which includes Brompton, Hammersmith, and Fulham, as well as Kensington. Taking the census tables of 1861 as a guide, we find Islington very strong in clerks, more than 2000 of them; and we may be quite certain that a vast majority of these—perhaps nine-tenths of them—earn their bread in the City, although they eat it, and sleep after it, at Islington. Taking the

much-used phrase 'City-men' as mainly comprising merchants, bankers, stockbrokers, commercial brokers generally, ship-owners, accountants, and clerks, it is found that there are 24,000 of those who 'sleep' (and are therefore put down as 'living') in the metropolitan districts *outside* the City. But the City very fairly claims them among her sons; they come to her every day; and she supplies them with the wealth which enables them to support their families in ease and comfort. And it seems to us, moreover, that the shopkeepers would swell the list greatly, seeing that they hardly come under the designation of 'merchants.' He who would expect to find a Cheapside or Ludgate Hill tradesman sleeping in the City, would reckon without his host; those well-to-do men know better; they know what it is to have a villa and a garden at Muswell Hill, or Southgate, or Hampstead, or somewhere in the belt of pleasant country which surrounds the metropolis. It is, of course, not merely the outlying districts of the metropolis which receive these City-men when the labours of the day are over; the ample railway accommodation affords easy access to scores of pleasant places within a range of twenty miles of London, which are becoming every year more and more dotted with city villas. Nay, is it not now well known that even Brighton is a suburb of the great metropolis, bringing up business-men every morning, and taking them home again to dinner? Mr Scott, advertising to the strong force of City-men living at Kensington, asks whether it would not be truer to say that they live in the City. 'Their thoughts, hopes, cares, and anxieties are concentrated in the City of London. Hundreds of thousands of the best brains of the metropolis wend their way every morning from the non-municipal districts towards the City proper, to devote themselves to the chosen business of their lives during the whole business portion of the day; and then—when the doors of the Bank of England are shut, and the banking-houses have suspended payment until the morrow, when the Royal Exchange and Custom-house are closed, when the Stock Exchange has impartially ejected its bulls and its bears, and Lloyd's has made holiday—then and therefore these hundreds of thousands of mercantile men of the commercial emporium of the world return to the homes of their families in all directions of the compass, to refresh themselves, "to sleep, perchance to dream;" until the hour shall arrive when they must resume the active and energetic business of their lives in the City of London. Do those gentlemen, enumerated as in Kensington, live in Kensington or in London proper?' The City chamberlain answers his own question in favour of the latter alternative. He claims as his co-citizens those who come within or almost within the sound of Bow Bells to earn the means of feeding, clothing, and housing their families, to obtain commercial fame, and to maintain their position in society.

Far more wonderful than anything else connected with this question of a day census, is the number of persons who go into and pass out of the City every day, as customers, clients, or visitors, or as mere passers-through on the way to other parts of the metropolis; irrespective of those who sleep within the busy limits, and irrespective also of those who belong to the City in regard to every-day occupation and trade. In 1859, London Bridge was watched for twenty-four hours continuously; the result was

marvellous; for 107,000 persons crossed the bridge on foot, while an additional 60,000 crossed it while riding in or on vehicles. No wonder that this busy thoroughfare requires to be well paved!

The corporation determined, last year, that they would have another counting of these outdoor people, and that it should be well and thoroughly done. This was how they managed it. All the avenues that lead into the City were grouped into six portions; one day was devoted exclusively to each portion; and the aggregate of all six was believed to present a fair estimate for an average week-day. The enumerators found, as was indeed well known before, that the people who enter the City in early morning are mostly the dealers—wholesale and retail, shopkeeping and costermongering—in fish, meat, poultry, and vegetables. The business or commercial men, from the humble clerk to the mighty millionaire, make their appearance at various times between eight o'clock and noon. From noon till four o'clock, the outgoing and incoming are about equal; but then the tide turns, and there is a tremendous exodus between four o'clock and seven. We will now give some figures which will perhaps stagger the reader. Taking twelve business-hours, from six in the morning till six in the evening, the enumerators counted 549,613 persons entering the really-small City of London; in the sixteen hours between five in the morning and nine in the evening, the number reached 679,744; while, in the whole day of twenty-four hours, the number very nearly touched three-quarters of a million—namely, 728,986! In other words, a mass of persons, equal in number to twice the entire population of twenty cathedral cities—Oxford, Chichester, Worcester, Winchester, Wells, Peterborough, Rochester, Salisbury, Lincoln, Lichfield, Durham, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Canterbury, Carlisle, Chester, Bangor, Ely, and Ripon—enter the City of London every day, and the same number leave it.

If we ask how the enumerators managed to watch all the inlets, so as neither to miss Bullion the banker, nor Scrip the banker's clerk, Buttock the salesman, nor Scrag the salesman's porter, we are told that they watched three bridges, thirty-three carriage-roads, three footways or alleys, six steam-boat piers, two water-side stairs, and five railway stations.

A BLACK MARE WITH A WHITE STAR.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. II.

MAJOR GREGSON sat long that evening over his dinner, and the bottle of dry sherry that followed it. He had invited Croke to dine with him, but that individual had pleaded some pressing business as an excuse for declining the invitation; so the major partook of his meal in solitary state, and now sat with his chair drawn up to the fire—for a keen wind was blowing outside—and the decanter at his elbow, musing in somewhat melancholy mood.

As he had told Croke, he had come to Derby with his mind half made up to settle either in the town itself, or in the immediate neighbourhood of it. It was his native place; and all through his adventurous career in India and the North American provinces, his memory had clung to it tenaciously; and for years past, he had looked forward to the time when he should be able to retire from active service, and build up a happy

little home for his old age among the hills and woods of Derbyshire, where old friends, whom he had not seen since he was a lad, would ever be welcome visitors. And now that time had come. He was his own master, free to come and go unshackled by the trammels of military life; he had amassed a comfortable share of this world's goods; and one of the first uses he had made of his new-found freedom had been to fulfil the secret wish of his heart, and visit the spot that was hallowed in his memory with all the fond associations of boyhood. And what, so far, had been the result of his visit? Something very nearly akin to disappointment, although he would not whisper that ugly word even to himself. As he had told Crooke, the lack of all closer ties had disposed him to think more highly of those slight threads which remained to him. He had been weak enough to believe other men as deeply impressed with such trifles as he was. He had been foolish enough to hope that the school-boy friends of thirty years ago would be school-boys at heart still, as he felt himself to be; and that the delicate edging of sentiment, with which, as with a sweet-smelling plant, his own daily life was rounded, must of necessity flourish equally in the lives of others. But to-day had sufficed to undeceive him. He could not help acknowledging to himself that the three friends whom he had succeeded in hunting up by no means reached the height of the ideal standard which he had fixed up in his own mind to measure them by. The world's corrosion had eaten too deeply into their souls. From the three of them together it would have been difficult to eliminate one tolerable gentleman, and this was a fact to which the major could by no means shut his eyes. They would be no fit associates for him, should he come to settle in this part of the country. But could he really make up his mind so to do? Now that he had seen the town—how mean and small it looked; how dull and commonplace. Should he not feel that he was burying himself alive to make his home in such a spot? To be sure, there was the country; and it would be easy enough, by means of the introductions which he could command at any time, to gradually form a pleasant circle of acquaintances among the best families in the neighbourhood. His father, it is true, had been neither more nor less than a draper in Derby; but he himself—Major Isaac Gregson—was a man of note; a man whose name had been mentioned specially in the war-dispatches on more than one occasion; and the county would welcome him gladly as an acquisition of whom it might be reasonably proud.

In the course of the next few days, the major's fame went abroad in the little town; for the landlord of the *Brown Bear*—who never seemed quite able to get over his surprise at finding so tremendous a fire-eater so short of stature and so mild of demeanour—took care to inform all and sundry who frequented his bar-parlour, that the quiet-looking gentleman in number three was none other than the celebrated Major Gregson, of whose exploits everybody had heard—'A man, sir, who has killed more black chaps than any other man living; who has fought a tiger single-handed; and who yet reads his Bible every night like a Christian.' From this source the news spread in ever-widening circles; and on the third day of his stay, the major was surprised by a visit from the mayor, who, having, as he said, heard of the arrival of

his distinguished townsman, had come to pay his respects, and at the same time request the honour of the major's company to dinner. Other invitations followed quickly from some of the best people in the town, and the major found himself in clover. He began to think that, after all, he might do worse than pitch his tent within the hospitable gates of his native place. He even went the length of consulting Tom Crooke as to whether there was any likely house in the town in want of a tenant, or any small estate for sale in the neighbourhood that would suit at once his tastes and his pocket. But Crooke had nothing suitable on his books just then.

At this second interview with the auctioneer, Major Gregson was more reserved, both in his speech and demeanour, than he had been on the previous occasion. What he had been told in the interim respecting Mr Thomas Crooke had not been to the credit of that individual. He had been told, on authority that he could not doubt, that Crooke was idle, vicious, and dissipated; that he was a gambler and a drunkard, and that his ill-treatment of his wife was a notorious fact. Now, Crooke's wife, as Major Gregson further heard, was his old schoolmaster's daughter, Letty Leyland by name, and he had a very vivid recollection of her, as a dark-eyed beautiful child, when he was a boy at school. As such, she had taken firm hold of his imagination; for years after he had left school, when he was in India, a young subaltern with few guineas in his purse, slowly fighting his way upward, he had had pleasant love-dreams, of which Letty Leyland, as a dark-eyed houri, just budding into womanhood, had formed the central figure. But these were dreams of long ago; and Letty Leyland was now Mrs Crooke—a middle-aged, ill-used woman, the wife of a profligate and a drunkard.

He met her on one occasion in the outskirts of the town, as he was taking his forenoon constitutional. He knew her the moment he saw her. It must have been something of the old look in her eyes, combined with some fine instinct of his own heart, that told him who she was. She was quite a plain-looking woman now, with gray hair and homely attire; but the major's heart warmed unaccountably towards her, as he stopped in front of her, and lifted his hat.

'Pardon me for addressing you,' he said; 'but I am an old scholar of Dr Leyland's, and, if I mistake not, you are his daughter.'

'I am, or rather was,' said Mrs Crooke, flushing painfully, 'for my father has been dead these five-and-twenty years.'

'I knew you again, although it is over thirty years since I was at school. But you are now Mrs Crooke, are you not?'

'I am.'

'Pardon me, but you look as if you had seen much trouble.'

'Then my looks do not belie me,' she said with a bitter smile. 'Do you know what it is never to lie down at night without wishing that you may never get up again? Do you know what it is never to rise in the morning without wishing that you may be dead before sunset? But of course you do not. What should a prosperous gentleman like you know of such matters?—Happiness! I almost forget that there is such a word in the language.'

'Mrs Crooke, you have my warmest sympathy in your troubles—my sympathy and respect. Your father was the best friend my youth ever knew;

and should you, in your turn, ever need the assistance of a friend, I hope you will grant me the privilege of acting in that light towards you. There is my card, which I pray you to accept. The name on it may be unknown to you; but were your father alive, he would at once remember it.' Unaccustomed tears stood in the major's eyes as he spoke thus.

'You are a good man,' said Mrs Crooke earnestly, as she took the card; 'and I thank you for your offer; but it is not likely that I shall ever trouble you. Your ways and mine lie widely apart, and we must each of us bear our own burden after our own fashion.' She held out her hand as she spoke. The major took it, and pressed it respectfully in his; and then, without another word, they parted.

'What a consummate villain the fellow must be to ill-treat that woman!' murmured the major to himself as he went on his way.

He called on Crooke two or three times a week, but it was rarely he could find that person at his office. When he did succeed in seeing him, he confined the conversation entirely to business topics; for however much the major's opinion of Crooke might have altered since their first interview, having once promised him certain remunerative commissions, he was too conscientious a man not to fulfil that promise to the strictest letter. Meanwhile, new friends were gathering round the old soldier day by day; and day by day he found the little town becoming a more agreeable tarrying-place, and even beginning to invest itself, in his thoughts, with a home-like aspect, such as a tired wanderer like himself knew how to appreciate.

It so fell out, about this time, that Major Gregson accepted an invitation to visit one of his new-found friends at Melbourne, a small hamlet ten or a dozen miles from Derby. The major went, stayed two nights, and decided to return to Derby after dinner on the evening of the third day. As on the occasion of his memorable journey from Nottingham, he had travelled by post-chaise, so he now adopted the same method of locomotion. His friend's dinner had been good, the wines superb, and before the chaise had got three miles out of Melbourne, the major was in a comfortable post-prandial snooze. He was suddenly and disagreeably aroused by the putting down of the chaise-window, by the presentation of a pistol at his head, and by a peremptory demand for his watch and purse. The major was in dinner-dress, and unarmed. To resist would have been the height of folly. Under such circumstances, to submit with a good grace is the best philosophy. The major's coolness did not desert him.

'Here is my purse,' said he. 'Fortunately, it is not very heavy. As for my watch, unless I am mistaken, you are the individual who relieved me of it a few weeks ago, and I am happy to think that I have not bought another since that time.'

The highwayman took the purse without a word, raised his hat, bowed politely, and vanished.

'As I live, the identical fellow that robbed me before,' muttered the major, as the clatter of hoofs died away down the stony road. 'The Derbyshire Turpin—the fellow with the blackened face, and mounted on a black horse with a white star. A pretty thing to say of one of his Majesty's officers—that he has been twice robbed by the same man, without so much as firing a single shot in his own defence. What would Colonel Chowder and old Bottomley think?'

What the landlord of the *Brown Bear* thought, and what the landlord's guests thought, as the major descended from the chaise, and walked upstairs in grim silence to his own room, leaving the postboy to tell the tale, was, that of all unlucky gentlemen, he was the most unlucky. The topic was a thirsty one, and could not be properly discussed without frequent fresh glasses; and more people came in, so that, by and by, the house became quite crowded; and the postboy was had into the parlour, and his story pumped out of him at least twenty times in the course of a couple of hours, to compensate for which exhaustive process as much drink was poured into him as his carcass would hold, so that, finally, he had to be carried to bed in a state of hopeless imbecility.

The major's man coming down-stairs when he had finally disposed of his master for the night, admitted to the landlord, in the discreetest of whispers, that 'he never before see the old boy so much put out of his way.'

'He's a gentleman as never swears, the major is,' went on the man; 'but when he talks aloud to himself, as he did to-night, and stares so with his eyes, as if he saw something that nobody else could see, why, then I know there's something more than common on his mind.'

The landlord was dying to ask what it was the major talked about, but he merely said: 'Ay, ay, that was very strange now, wasn't it?'

'You wouldn't think it strange if you knew the major as well as I know him,' responded the man. 'What seemed to trouble his mind most was, that he should be twice robbed by one man without having a single shot at the blackguard. You may take your davy that he won't go rambling about the country again without his pistols.'

Major Gregson's sleep that night was troubled, haunted by uncanny dreams, from which he woke up three or four times with a start. At last, just as the first faint streaks of daylight were beginning to chase away the darkness, he got out of bed, and slipping into his dressing-gown and slippers, he took to pacing his bedroom from end to end, repeating to himself long passages from the Psalms and the Book of Job as he did so.

The major was still pacing his bedroom when the grave-like silence outside was broken by the faint sound of a horse's tramp. Very faint and far off it sounded at first, but momentarily coming nearer, and presently penetrating the bedroom, it attracted the major's ear. He stopped in his walk to listen. The gray light of dawn filled the street by this time, and all objects were clearly visible. The quick tramp of the horse came nearer and nearer. The major was still listening with an absent look on his face, as though his thoughts were far away, when a peculiar something in the regular tramp, tramp of the coming horse, which was now close at hand, startled him, in one brief instant, into vivid life. The look on his face changed into one of the most breathless anxiety. Two strides carried him to the window: it was the work of an instant to pluck back the blind, and to peer out, with face close pressed to the panes, into the gray, solitary street. He was just in time to see a black-cloaked figure, mounted on a big black horse, ride swiftly past. As the horseman rode by, the sound that had so startled Major Gregson was plainly audible; it was the clank of a loose shoe on the hard flints of the road.

When the sound had died completely away in

the distance, the major drew back from the window, and let the blind fall into its place. He sighed deeply, and sat down on the nearest chair. He was very pale and very grave, and looked like a man on whom had fallen the sudden shock of ill news. 'Great Heaven, to think that it should indeed be so!' he murmured. After that, he sat for more than an hour without speaking or moving, thinking intently. Then he shaved and dressed, and went out for a walk, still with the same deep gravity of manner upon him.

All that day, and for the two following days, Major Gregson scarcely stirred out of his rooms, except to take a quiet walk early in the morning or late in the evening, when there was little chance of meeting any of his acquaintances. His mind was evidently ill at ease; but he kept his own counsel, and spoke no word to any one of the secret care that was brooding over him. The third night he sat up later than usual, writing busily. When he had filled three sides of a sheet of foolscap, he read over what he had written, and signed it. Then he folded up the document in a large sheet, and sealed it carefully, and wrote outside: 'To be opened in case of my death on 29th instant.'

When this was done, he turned to his diary, and wrote as follows: 'This day-week I shall (D.V.) go to Notts, and draw two hundred guineas out of the bank for a purpose that I wot of.'

'During the two days and nights just past, I have been inwardly admonished to do a particular thing, and I dare not refuse. The trial has been a sore one; but when it became evident that there was no other door open to me, and that I must subordinate and utterly crush my own weak will in this matter, then I said: "So let it be;" since which time great inward peace has been mine.'

'In case I should not come back alive, I have left in my desk a statement of my reasons for doing as I purpose to do; for I would not have it thought that I entered on this expedition rashly, or without much prayerful entreaty that my darkness might be lightened.'

Though dark my path, and tempests never cease,
Let me but touch Thy hand, and all is peace.

'To read a chapter of the *Holy Living and Dying*, and then to bed.'

The major's man was pleased next morning to find that his master's cheerfulness had come back to him, and that the cloud of care which had brooded over him for the last few days had at length taken to itself wings and vanished. Yes, the major's sunny, cheerful manner had come back, but with more frequent pauses of silent thought than heretofore, with a greater liking for solitary walks, and a more constant reading of godly books.

The morning of the twenty-ninth came in due course, and immediately after breakfast the major said to himself, as though he were stating a proposition that might by chance be open to dispute: 'I must go and see Tom Croke.' Accordingly, he went in search of Mr Croke, and was fortunate enough to find that worthy in his office.

'I am going to Nottingham by the mid-day coach, Tom Croke,' said the major, 'and I want you to take a holiday and go with me.' He spoke this morning in a tone of greater cordiality than he had used since their first meeting.

'Much obliged to you, major,' said Croke drily; 'but as to taking a holiday to-day, I hardly see my

way to do so—so very busy, you see. Of course, if it's a matter of business that you want me on, I must put other things on one side, and go with you.'

'But it's not a matter of business,' said Major Gregson. 'I won't have the affair put on that footing. I am going to Nottingham simply to draw a couple of hundred guineas out of the bank, which I want for a certain purpose; and if you will go with me, we'll have a comfortable little dinner together, and some of the best wine that can be had for love or money, and be altogether as jolly as a couple of sand-boys. Say that you'll go, Tom Croke.'

'Do you bank at Nottingham, major, that you have to go there for your money?' asked Croke, without heeding the latter part of the major's speech.

'I do bank at Nottingham,' answered the old soldier. 'A half-cousin of my father's is in that business, and all my little savings are in his keeping.'

'At what hour do you purpose leaving Nottingham on your return?'

'If you go with me, we will return at whatever hour may suit you best. If I go alone, I shall not set out on my way back till a late hour—say, eight or nine o'clock—having a few calls which may as well be made if I have not the pleasure of your company. But you will go with me, will you not?'

'Sorry, major, to be obliged to decline your kind invitation, but the business I have on hand admits of no delay—at least, not for holiday purposes. Are you not afraid, by the by, to travel with so much money in your possession? Suppose the rider of the black mare with the white star should bid you stand and deliver for the third time?'

'Who ever heard of a man being stopped three times in succession by the same thief? No; I consider that I am far safer this time than if I had never been robbed at all. Do not you agree with me?'

'It may be as you say, major,' replied Croke with a sneer. 'But I would not advise you to trust too implicitly in such a doctrine.'

'But you are the only person who knows of my errand to Nottingham,' said the major; 'consequently, I am unable to see in what way I am running any extraordinary risk by having so large a sum of money about me.'

'Oh, the rider of the black mare has a happy knack of finding out that sort of secret,' said Croke with a laugh. 'However, I hope with all my heart that you may get back safe and sound, and with your guineas in your pocket.—How about our bet, by the by? How about the three dozen of port? The three months are slipping quietly away, yet you seem no nearer towards effecting your object.'

'I am nearer my object, Tom Croke. I am six weeks nearer it,' said the major. 'If I live, I shall win my wager.'

'I don't think you will, Major Gregson,' said Croke, tossing his penknife into the air, and catching it dexterously as it fell. 'I really don't think you will win your wager.'

'The event will prove,' answered the major solemnly. 'For the last time, I ask you, Thomas Croke—will you go with me?'

'And for the last time, Major Gregson, I positively answer, No.'

Major Gregson had the inside of the coach to

himself that day as he journeyed from Derby to Nottingham, and his melancholy musings were unbroken till he reached his journey's end. He proceeded at once to the bank, and drew out two hundred guineas, which, sealed up in a canvas bag, he deposited temporarily with the landlord of the hotel at which he had ordered his dinner. He then debated within himself whether he should call upon his few Nottingham acquaintances, but finally decided that, to-day, he was not in spirits for society. Instead, he took a walk through the meadows by the banks of the Trent, and found his way back to the hotel at dusk. When he had dined, and a very poor dinner he made, he sat brooding over the fire, leaving untouched the wine at his elbow, waiting till the clock should strike eight, at which hour he had ordered a post-chaise to be in readiness. At half-past seven, he took out his little pocket-Bible, and read a chapter slowly and devoutly. At a quarter to eight, he drew, one by one, from the pocket of his travelling-cloak, a small oblong mahogany-case, a powder-flask, and a tiny bag, holding some half-dozen bullets. The mahogany-case held a brace of pistols, which Major Gregson now proceeded to load with the utmost care. This done, he rang for his bill, put on his cloak and hat; and carrying the pistols under his arm, he went down-stairs, and was shut up inside the chaise. The bag containing the two hundred guineas was stowed away in a small locker near his feet.

For the first few miles of the road, Major Gregson let the pistols lie unheeded beside him; but as soon as the sixth milestone was passed, he drew himself up with military precision, as though he had received the word of command, and grasped his weapons, one in each hand. The moon was in her second quarter, and the night was bright, clear, and windy. Both windows of the chaise were purposely left open. The major sat bolt upright, turning his sharp eyes from one window to the other, and listening with all his might for the sound of approaching hoofs. His cloak was wrapped well around him, for the night was chilly. He sat with both his pistols at full cock, the barrels protruding from the folds of his cloak in a line with the windows of the chaise. His face was very stern and resolute; and could the landlord of the *Brown Bear* have seen his guest at that moment, he would have been able to form a tolerable idea of how Forlorn Gregson looked when about to head one of his desperate charges, and might have been strengthened in faith as to his undoubted qualities as a fire-eater.

The chaise, keeping up its monotonous jog-trot, passed one milestone after another till the twelfth of them was left behind, the major still sitting bolt upright, as grimly watchful as a tiger in its lair that scents the hunters from afar. Suddenly, a faint sound struck upon his ear. His head went forward an inch or two in his anxiety to listen, and his muscles tightened like steel. The same instant, the postboy, with an oath, drove the spur deep into his horse's flanks, and the crazy old chaise started forward at a headlong pace. They had gone thus but a few yards, as it seemed, when a dark mounted figure shot past the window, and wheeling swiftly round on the affrighted postboy, brought the whole concern to a dead halt. Next instant, the dark mounted figure was at the window, and a pistol was protruded into the chaise. 'Your money, or your life!'

Those were his last words on earth. A slight movement of the major's elbow, a contraction of his forefinger, a flash, an explosion, and with a wild inarticulate cry, the highwayman fell from his horse, shot clean through the heart. With a loud snort of terror, the horse started off, dragging the dead man at its heels; but before it had gone more than twenty yards, the robber's foot slipped out of the stirrup, and the horse, freed from its burden, went off at a terrific pace down the road.

Major Gregson, assisted by the postilion, carried the dead man back to the chaise, and then proceeded to examine into his condition by the light of one of the chaise-lamps.

'Dead as a door-nail,' said the postilion, after a few moments.

'Even so,' answered the major sadly. 'As I thought—as I thought,' he added under his breath. 'He courted his fate, and his blood be on his own head.'

'Why, the black comes off his face!' said the postilion in surprise. 'I thought when I saw him first that it was his natural colour.'

'It was only put on by way of disguise,' said the major.

They then put the dead robber into the chaise, and performed the rest of their journey at a foot-pace, the major walking by the side of the chaise. It was very late when they got into Derby, and they went straight to the house of the chief-constable, and knocked him up. The major told his story, and the body was taken out and placed for the night on the table of a small waiting-room. One of the constables, throwing the light of his lantern into the face of the dead man, started back in dismay.

'Tom Crooke's face, as I live!' he exclaimed.

'It is the face of Thomas Crooke,' said Major Gregson solemnly. 'He and the rider of the black mare with the white star were one and the same man.'

Late as was the hour, Major Gregson's first act, on getting back to his hotel, was to induce the wife of his landlord, who was a kindly good-hearted soul, to go at once to Mrs Crooke, and break to her, as gently as might be, the news of the sad fate that had befallen her husband.

In the course of next day, a jury was impanelled to sit upon the body of the dead highwayman. Major Gregson and the postboy were summoned to give evidence. The major's statement was simple, and to the point.

'Having been unfortunate enough,' he said, 'to be twice robbed within the space of six weeks, I determined to protect myself for the future as far as it lay in my power to do so. Yesterday, I had occasion to go to Nottingham to draw from the bank the sum of two hundred guineas, and on my return I armed myself with my pistols. The moment the highwayman presented himself at the window of the chaise, I shot him dead.'

The postilion gave confirmatory evidence as far as his knowledge went. The verdict of the jury, given without a moment's hesitation, was one of 'Justifiable Homicide,' coupled with a vote of thanks to Major Gregson for the bravery displayed by him in ridding society of one of its greatest pests.

Just as the case was finished, Crooke's horse, which had been captured a mile or two out of Derby, was brought to the door of the hotel where the jury were sitting. It was recognised by several

there as the black mare which Crooke had kept for the ostensible purpose of going about the country on his business avocations; only, there was this singular fact to be observed, that the captured mare was marked with a large white star in the middle of its forehead, whereas the auctioneer's favourite animal was known to be entirely black.

'Fetch a little warm water and a sponge,' said Major Gregson.

The hint was acted on; and the star was washed out without difficulty.

Through the intercession of Major Gregson, the body of Crooke was given up to his widow, instead of being handed over to the medical authorities for dissection, which would otherwise have been its fate.

The major, in his evidence before the jury, made no mention of the little incident which had been the means of first directing his suspicions towards Crooke. When he was robbed for the second time, on his way from Melbourne, as the highwayman galloped off, the major's quick ears detected that one of his horse's shoes was loose. Such a trifling fact would have soon escaped his memory, had he not, a few hours later—at daybreak next morning, as he was pacing his bedroom—heard the same sound again. The major, looking out of his window, saw that, on this occasion, the rider of the horse with the loose shoe was none other than Tom Crooke; and from that moment the conviction was borne forcibly in upon his mind that his old schoolfellow and the rider of the black mare with the white star were one and the same. Of the mental processes by means of which the major arrived at the conviction that to him was delegated the duty of ridding society of this man, we have no hint beyond those conveyed in the extract from his diary already given. The major would seem to have fought against this conviction up to the last moment, judging from the pains he took to induce Crooke to accompany him to Nottingham as a friend; but when he found his invitation so peremptorily declined, he was none the less sternly determined to go through with the duty which, as he conceived, had been laid upon him.

For some unexplained reason, Derby seemed to become distasteful to Major Gregson after the death of Crooke. About a fortnight later, he returned to London, from which place he went to Bath; and for the remainder of his life he oscillated between the two, dying ultimately at the latter place at the great age of ninety.

THE ROTUNDA AT WOOLWICH.

HALF an hour from London Bridge by the North Kent Railway will enable a traveller to reach the Dockyard Station, from which, in fifteen minutes, Woolwich Common may be attained on foot. On the right-hand side of the pathway leading to the common, the traveller will observe a curious Chinese-looking building, in shape like a Chinaman's hat. This is the Rotunda, which may be visited every day, except Saturdays, and except from 12 noon to 1 p.m. each day. The Rotunda was erected in St James's Park in 1814 upon the occasion of the visit of the allied sovereigns to this country; but was afterwards transferred to Woolwich, where it is now used as a

museum for models of artillery, and for the weapons or curiosities of various countries. The Rotunda is thirty-nine yards in diameter, and covers an area of about ten thousand six hundred feet. Upon first entering the grounds outside the Rotunda, the visitor will see a collection of iron plates smashed and broken up in various ways. These are examples of the effect of various kinds of shot and shells upon armour-plates, with which experiments were carried on at Shoeburyness. On the opposite side of the enclosure are varieties of ancient guns, dating back to the very earliest constructions. Some of these are beautifully worked up on the outside, and are in that respect good specimens of art. They almost all, however, exhibit defects which shew that the constructors were ignorant of the first principles requisite in a powerful gun, they being generally too long, and almost of the same thickness of metal throughout; whereas a gun to be strong should be thicker at the breech, and taper considerably towards the muzzle. Some of these guns were captured from England's opponents in war; others recovered from the depths of the sea, as in the case of the *Royal George*, sunk at Spithead; whilst others are merely specimens of the weapons at various dates.

The interior of the building presents the appearance of a large tent, the centre pole of the tent being represented by a pillar, on which are engraved the names of those officers whose rank or abilities have rendered them famous in the history of artillery. Among these are many whose fame is great in the regiment to which they belonged, but with whom the public are not so well acquainted. A few remarks on this subject, therefore, may not be out of place. Lieutenant-General Borgard entered the service of England in 1692. He was a Dane by birth, and he was appointed first commandant in 1727, and in that capacity he was called on to revise the artillery of the day. From 1676 to 1709, General Borgard's career was one of war. During that interval, he was personally engaged in eighteen battles and twenty-four sieges; and although several times wounded, he yet lived to the great age of ninety-two years. Passing over several other officers of note, we find the names of Sir W. Congreve, Bart., the father of the inventor of the Congreve rocket; Lieutenant-general Shrapnel, the inventor of the destructive Shrapnel shell; General Sir Howard Douglas, whose work on Gunnery is well known; Major-general Sir Alexander Dickson, the Duke's right-hand man during the Peninsular war; Major Norman Ramsey, the hero of Fuentes de Onoro; and others whose career was such as to make them examples to their successors.

Upon entering the building, and turning to the right, the first specimens likely to attract the attention of the visitor are a number of curiously shaped iron implements, all of which seem to possess certain properties of the corkscrew, or to be imitations of that useful implement. These are the successful or unfortunate attempts of inventors to construct a shot which, upon being discharged from a gun, shall rotate upon its axis, the axis being horizontal. Many of these are ingenious as far as appearance goes, but are valueless in practice; in fact, it may be taken as a settled question, that any form of shot which gives by this form a rotation, tends to retard the flight of the projectile, and therefore to reduce the range. Thus, the necessary spinning requisite to cause the shot to remain

with one point always foremost, is best given by the gun itself, not by the air acting on the shot.

Passing round the building, a variety of models will be seen of those foreign stations where the artillery are quartered in large numbers. Lately, a very beautiful and perfect model of Gibraltar has been added to the collection in the Rotunda, every building and all details being accurately represented. In various parts of the room are models of the different dockyards in England, of the island of St Helena, of Quebec, of the lines of Torres Vedras, of the beautiful Bay of Rio, and of other interesting places.

In a small room opposite the entrance-door, the firearms of all ages are placed. An examination of these will shew how slowly yet surely improvement has marched onward. First, the musket was discharged by means of a piece of lighted match—a kind of slow-match, similar to what we now see used for lighting cigars at cricket-matches and at other rural festivals. The soldier, previous to discharging his piece, was compelled to blow his match, in order to freshen it up, and then apply it to the priming. Compared to this process of discharging a musket, the flint and steel was a great advance, and this step seems to have been generally taken during the seventeenth century. A variety of arms of excellent workmanship are shewn in the arm-racks, and many of these are of ancient date. The great improvements, however, seem to have been made in the gun-locks, the barrels of olden firearms seeming to be as strong as are those now manufactured.

From the old flint and steel, we come to the percussion-cap; and it seems strange how long after the introduction of the percussion-cap for sporting purposes, the inefficient flint and steel was used for the military. It is comparatively in modern times, however, that the use of rifled arms has been general; for although a portion of the army was formerly armed with this weapon, yet when a round bullet was used, it had to be driven down the barrel, and this feat was not easily accomplished after a few rounds had been fired and the barrel became foul; consequently, until the elongated and expanding bullet was used, the advantages gained by accuracy of fire were not sufficient to compensate for the disadvantages of slow loading.

In this same room is a very good specimen of the French gun of a few years back. It was a present from the Emperor of the French. The woodwork of the carriage is very neatly and strongly put together.

Near this room is a small time-measurer, on certainly an original principle. A tray about eight inches square has a zigzag tramway across it; down this tramway, a ball travels, and upon reaching the bottom, runs against a spring, which causes the tray to turn on a central axis; thus making the down side the up. The ball has thus a descending course again, and travels to the opposite end of the tramway, touches a similar spring there, which turns the tray, and another course is run; and so on. Each time the tray turns, it registers this movement, and thus a measure of time is obtained. The instrument was formerly supposed to be the nearest approach to perpetual motion that had been made, as it went for a year after having been wound up. As, however, it very frequently got out of order, its annual course was rarely completed, and a few months' work generally resulted in a break-down.

As early as the year 1550, rifled barrels were used for firearms; the earliest specimens in the Rotunda, however, date from 1623. A rifled harquebuse with seven grooves is shewn, made by Kotter of Nuremberg, of this period. The barrel of the piece is thirty-three inches long; it has one turn in forty-five inches, and the rifling is polygonal, the sides of the polygon being convex curves. Specimens of the hunting harquebuse, rifled with nine grooves, as well as others of later date, may be seen close together. There are many specimens of the rifles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from Holland, France, Austria, Prussia, &c. These have all flint-locks, and were used with a spherical bullet, the grooves varying from five to seventeen.

As early as 1839, a sergeant-major of artillery proposed a rifle to carry an elongated bullet with a cup at the base. It had six grooves in it, the twist being 1 in 29·5 inches, and was hexagonally bored. This weapon was so very near the right thing, that it seems difficult to understand how it was neglected at the time, unless it happened to depend upon the tender mercies of those well-meaning old military dummies who asserted that 'Brown Bess had done very well in the Peninsula, and therefore no improvements were required.'

The Delvigne-Minié percussion rifle that was first used in the Kaffir war of 1852, and with which the majority of the infantry in the Crimea were armed, is here shewn.

The various developments of the Enfield rifle are well worthy of attention. The first experimental rifle does not differ, except in the number of its grooves, from that lately in use.

The weapon now considered the most suitable in all respects is a breech-loading rifled arm carrying an elongated bullet. This complete condition was not arrived at hurriedly, but required three distinct steps—namely, the rifling, the fitness to carry an elongated bullet, and the breech-loading apparatus.

As early as 1702, a breech-loader revolver was made. It has a flint-lock, four barrels, and is of Spanish make. A specimen of a wrought-iron breech-loading gun, of the date of Louis XIII., is a representative of French skill at that date.

A French breech-loading rifled wall-piece of 1690, double-barrelled, may be seen near the centre of the Rotunda; and near it a breech-loading machine containing thirty-one barrels, all rifled, and arranged so that one cap will simultaneously discharge the whole number. Several other breech-loaders are exhibited, some shewing great ingenuity.

There seems to be a strange fascination attending invention, a strange clairvoyance combined with an unaccountable blindness. The inventor's first mania usually is a suspicious secretiveness; he fears that every person is watching in order to discover his secret, and he therefore carefully guards his treasure. A visit to the Rotunda, and an examination of the olden specimens there exhibited, would be too risky a proceeding for Mr Inventor to attempt; he therefore carefully guards his secret, and secures his patent, and then is informed, that if he will visit the Rotunda at Woolwich, or the model-room in the Arsenal, he will find in Class A, No. X, or Class B, No. Z, his invention, dated forty years ago, and rejected on account of a defect which he had overlooked. This is very frequently occurring; whilst less seldom an old idea is caught, and adapted with a

slight improvement, and the adaptor, though no real inventor, reaps a golden harvest.

A brass revolver of six barrels, and about one hundred and fifty years of age, used to be shewn in the United Service Museum, and it was difficult to trace the difference between the mechanism of this weapon and the far-famed Colt's revolver. The similitude between many of our approved modern weapons and those ancient implements contained in the Rotunda, will be evident to all observers, and may lead to curious speculations as to whom honour is due.

Before the introduction of firearms, and when men were clothed in armour, and were thus to a great extent invulnerable, a somewhat similar battle went on between swords and pikes against armour as is now carried on between iron-plates and cannon. There were halberds and bills, partisans, poleaxes and pikes, spears, lances, &c. Those properties possessed now by steel or chilled shot, were endeavoured to be imparted to the weapons used against armour. Every variety of these implements are shewn, and were doubtless as famous in their day as are now the needle-gun and Enfield rifle, though an equal number of men armed with light swords would, were armour dispensed with, give a good account of their heavily armed antagonists.

Amongst the daggers is a weapon, a native of Venice, and well suited to glut a Venetian's vengeance. It is upwards of nine inches long, and constructed so that, when in a wound, it will open by pressing a spring; a fit weapon for an enraged Shylock.

Some excellent specimens of ancient and modern armour are deposited in this museum, and we cannot fail to regard these with wonder. Are men differently constituted now? Is the race of warriors degenerating? or how is it that our troops now faint and fall exhausted, though weighed down only by a heavy shako or busby, and only partially choked by a thick leather stock? The warriors of the sixteenth century wore helmets weighing fourteen pounds, and we have no records of their being killed thereby. This, however, may arise merely from the fact, that in those days honourable members were not accustomed to move for returns of the number of men smothered by their helmets; and hence there is merely an absence of evidence, not a paucity of such occurrences. There are curious specimens of shirts-of-mail, *gardes*; of arm-defences; of *genouillères*, or knee-pieces; *cuissearts*, or leg-defences; *vambraces* for the lower arm; *chanfreins* for the horse's head, &c.

From the weapons of ancient dates in our own country we may turn to the curious though effective weapons of savages—the assagai of the Amakosa Kaffir and Zulu, some used entirely for throwing, others for close quarters and stabbing; the envenomed arrow and tiny bow of the Bushman, and the knobkerries of the Mantatees, formed from the horn of the white rhinoceros.

Attention should be directed to the means adopted for crossing chasms, and for conveying horses across. These are shewn by models, from which an idea can be easily obtained of the means of transport.

Relics from the great fire at the Tower on the 30th of October 1841; also the ashes produced in a stove by the burning of a hundred thousand one-pound notes at the Bank of England.

A very useful and ingenious fire-alarm is here

shewn. The principle is, that a slight increase above ordinary heat will cause the mercury to rise, and to thus press upon an index which rings an alarm-bell. Another instrument for the same purpose acts as an alarm by causing the pulsations of a pulse-glass to become excited when moderate heat is applied; the pulse-glass then turns over, and discharges the alarm. Both these inventions are attributed to Sir W. Congreve.

Not the least interesting part of the collection are the many specimens of fuses used to burst shells fired from heavy guns. These are in a glass case, and are given in section, so that the construction of these contrivances can be seen; they require explanation, as do many other of the specimens in this museum. This, however, is given by an intelligent man, who is always present. The effect likely to be produced by the bursting of a shell is shewn in a conical-shaped case, where the portions of a shell are riveted to the sides in the manner in which they would disperse upon the bursting of the shell. The destructive effect of these missiles can be easily understood by this model.

This is but a brief description of the museum contained in this building, which is unique in itself, and will well repay a visit. It should not be rapidly passed over, as many museums are, but the details of the various objects should be closely looked into and studied. The Rotunda stands in some beautiful grounds, which are, however, private, as they are for the use of officers of the regiments stationed at Woolwich, and are kept up at their expense. Still the ease with which Woolwich is reached from London, renders a visit to the Rotunda quite worth the time and trouble.

THE CHILD-ANGEL.

Little tongues that chatter, chatter—
Little feet that patter, patter
With a ceaseless motion all the day—
Little eyes that softly lighten—
Little cheeks that flush and brighten—
Little voices singing at their play—

In my memory awaken
Thoughts of one who has been taken—
Of a little heart that beats no more—
Of a little voice that's ringing,
'Mid the angels sweetly singing
Songs of gladness on a distant shore!

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